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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000576

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SUBJECT: TURKEY AIMS TO MODERATE, MODERNIZE THE OIC

REF: ANKARA 457

ANKARA 00000576 001.4 OF 002

Classified By: PolCouns Janice G. Weiner for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary and Comment: As evidenced at the Dakar Summit, Turkey is endeavoring to capitalize on its growing influence in the Muslim world to modernize and moderate the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Turkey independently advocated for communiqué language supporting the newly independent Kosovo, directly challenging opposition from other key members. Although the approved text fell short of Turkey's expectations, MFA contacts tell us the GOT will use it as a starting point for a stronger statement at the OIC Foreign Ministers Conference in Kampala. Turkey views the new OIC charter announced at Dakar, which it played a large role in creating, as a tool for transforming the grouping into a "modern international organization" with an interest in supporting rule of law and human rights. Turkey quietly shares our goal of increasing moderate Islamic voices. As we look to the OIC as a new forum for our message, Turkey's established leadership role and willingness to challenge more radical elements presents an opportunity for partnership on issues of mutual importance. End Summary and Comment.

12. (C) Since the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) rise to power in 2002, Turkey has leveraged its growing credibility in the Muslim world to expand its footprint in the OIC. Turkey, as a result, maintains a prominent leadership role in the organization's administration. At the March 13-14 OIC Summit in Dakar, member states extended popular Turkish citizen Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu's term as Secretary General until 2014. Headquartered in Ankara, the

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Standing Committee on Economic and Trade Cooperation (COMCEC) is permanently chaired by the Turkish president. Turkey also hosts the Statistical, Economic, Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries in Ankara, and the Research Center for Islamic History, Art, and Culture and the Islamic Conference Youth Forum in Istanbul. Most recently, Turkey has joined Iran and Indonesia in declaring its intention to host the 2014 OIC Summit, which would give Turkey the OIC Presidency from 2014-2017.

13. (C) Politically, Turkey has historically used the OIC as a platform to garner support for its Cyprus policy and the Turkish minority in Greece, explained MFA Arabian Peninsula Desk Officer Ceyhun Erciyes. The GOT is now working to modernize and moderate the OIC from within. Starting during its 2004-2005 OIC Presidency and in conjunction with SecGen Ihsanoglu Turkey has driven the process to transform the OIC into a "modern international organization" with an interest in rule of law and human rights. Erciyes noted the new OIC charter adopted in Dakar heavily reflects Turkey's initiatives. Furthermore, Turkey views itself as a moderating force to counter the more radical elements in the OIC such as Iran. Erciyes credited Turkey with toning down the traditionally scathing statement on Israel in the Dakar communique.

Carrying the Water at Dakar

14. (C) Turkey stepped up its constructive efforts at the Dakar Summit, most notably regarding Kosovo. Contrary to many member states' view that the OIC should wait until the June Foreign Ministers Conference in Kampala to address the issue, Turkey insisted on raising Kosovo at Dakar, the first official forum following its February independence declaration. As one of the first countries to extend recognition, noted MFA Deputy Director General for the Balkans and Western Europe Hasan Asan, Turkey also made widely known within the OIC its support for Kosovo's attendance in at the Summit (reftel). SecGen Ihsanoglu sent a letter directly to the Senegalese Government soliciting an invitation on behalf of the Kosovars. Asan added the GOT worked with the Albanian Government to refine its proposed Kosovo communique language to "tone down the rhetoric" and remove unnecessary passages that could inflame key nations.

15. (C) Erciyes told us that Turkey lobbied hard at the Summit for the proposed text despite significant objections from

ANKARA 00000576 002.4 OF 002

Egypt, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Indonesia. In addition, Turkey pushed for Kosovo recognition in all of its bilats on the margins. While the communique language on Kosovo is not as comprehensive as Turkey had hoped, the GOT intends to use it as a reference to push for stronger language in the Foreign Ministers Conference communique, especially if Saudi Arabia recognizes Kosovo beforehand. In addition to Kosovo, Erciyes reported Turkey introduced the approved text condemning criminal and terrorist activities by the Taliban and al-Qaeda and successfully countered the Iranian proposal to add a paragraph justifying certain acts of terrorism.

Youth Wing Receptive to U.S. Participation

16. (C) As with other aspects of the OIC, Turkey has played a lead role in the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF), the coordinating body for the OIC youth platform, since its creation in 2004. ICYF President (and Foreign Policy Advisor to Prime Minister Erdogan) Ali Sarikaya explained the ICYF is an umbrella organization comprised of over 40 youth NGOs from OIC member nations. The ICYF aims to increase inter-Muslim dialogue on such issues as diversity, religious tolerance, and globalization. The youth group works closely with the UN Alliance of Civilizations, an initiative of PM Erdogan. Given the group's mandate to increase its members' exposure to other cultures, Sarikaya told us that the ICYF would be receptive to a U.S. Muslim youth organization's participation in its activities.

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